

The harp of burma essay sample

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Introduction to Book and Author:

The Harp of Burma, (Biruma no Tategoto) was a short novel by Takeyama Michio, a disregarded thinker. He was a critic and scholar of German Literature and taught German in a First Higher School, Japan as a professor. He had interpreted the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. He was disillusioned that so many figures from the German literary world had gladly toed the Nazi line throughout World War II, and he flew the flag of nihilistic criticism in resistance. By the end of the war, Takeyama was opposed to the Tokyo Trial, arguing that a trial of revenge that had the vanquishers stand in judgment of the outdone offered no chance of examining the character of the modern society formed by fascist war criminals.

Today Takeyama is mainly remembered for his only novel, *The Harp of Burma*, which was first came out in the children's publication *Akatombo* (Red Dragonfly) in March 1947 and then in sequence from July 1947 to February 1948. It managed to cope the professional censorship. After some amendments, it was published in book form in 1948.

Analytical Summary of the Book:

The story begins at the end of World War II. Corporal Mizushima, the pride of his unit and a captain who graduated from a music school, led a company of Japanese troop. The soldiers are ordered to return to Siam, modern day Vietnam to regroup with thier fellow armed forces in the hell-ridden time of WWII. The troop is sent to a POW camp while young Mizushima is sent to save some Japanese soldiers who are not ceasing. He has sent out to the "triangle peak."

Mizushima start out to sway some soldiers to surrender. In the darkness of night, he escapes and disappears. However he gets gun down, he ran away, bleeds, falls, and is kayoed. He wakes up in a cannibalistic clan, and is cured. They start to give food to him, only being there for a month he became recovcers. and is tied and bound and shoved next to a fire.

Though, the cannibalistic clan tied, and bound and shoved him next to the fire. But he manages to escape by promising to marry the daughter of the tribe's chief. But, rather than getting married and make himself bounded, he escapes with a silver armlet. The silver armlet turned out to be a symbol of being a monk, and the only way to walk around Burma now, although not in a Japanese uniform, but in another outfit.

He en routes himself to join his brothers-in-arms in a Prisoner of War (POW) camp down at Mudon. He found hundreds of Japanese soldier's bodies lying, rotting in the forest swept over him. He swears to live a life of prayer, burying bones and bodies. His friends want him to go back with them to Japan, but he was not able to go back.

Style and Presentation of *The Harp of Burma*:

The Harp of Burma is the story of what happened to Mizushima and how it took exception and then changed him. It has a well written and easy to follow plot. The book is intentional tale of peace, understanding and point of view.

The Harp of Burma was written at the end of World War II in Burma. The book express all the rage sentiments about the war and its significance for

those who survived. It was written in the time when the war's horrors were still fresh in the minds of Japanese people. It states naive pacifism, and is also inward looking. Takeyama Michio's criticism on modern civilization, and his ideal image of eastern and western culture are enthusiastically narrated in this book.

Critical Analysis:

The Harp of Burma is a significant work not only as a war-time story for children, but also as a story describing the Japanese postwar period. In World War II, Burma in modern times known as Myanmar, was the sight of violent warfare between Japanese and British forces. In *The Harp of Burma*, the strains of an English folk song being sung by both sides provides as an opportunity to intensify mutual feelings. A Japanese warrior who had been a prisoner becomes a monk after the war and stays behind unaccompanied in Burma. He holds a burmese harp with him and soothes the spirits of his collapsed comrades, abandoning his chance to return home. Although Takeyama had never been to Burma, and his story was shaped using his imagination only, it became a smash hit in Japan and was twice made into a movie.

In simpler words, *The Harp of Burma* was a true story about a leader who has a liking for music, and a piece of writing on corpses of Japanese soldiers left in Burma, obliged Takeyama to write it. Takeyama wrote the story hoping that it might be a lament for those who lost their lives in fulfillment of their responsibilities.

Takeyama on no account let his characters discuss who was to blame for the war, or whether the foray of Asian countries was justified. War is lunacy, a disaster, a catastrophe, but not something that particular governments or leaders initiated. Yet *The Harp of Burma*'s humanistic point of view makes it a refreshing and inspirational book.

The Harp of Burma is filled with apprehension of the challenges the troop faces and the ambiguity of whether the strange monk is in fact Mizushima or not. Colors similar the monk's yellow robe, blue parakeets, red ruby, whitened bones lying in heaps are efficiently used. The illustration of the harp echoing in the rainforest is also remarkable. With these as the backdrop, the recognition of the war and defeat is told from a adult point of view. The story appeals to both adults and children, together with its depth of thought which is the distinguishing feature of the book. Takeyama wrote the story desiring that it might be an elegy for those who lost their lives for the sake of their duties.

The Harp of Burma attains much of its influence and pathos through the collocation of the debris and horror of war with the beauty and serenity of nature. As is often the case in Japanese films, humanity is concorderd a modest role in a huge universe. The book is a catastrophic and touching book. The outstanding novelty of the story is an ideal antidote to the puffed up and overripe self-importance of most of the books as well as films about the reasons and consequences of the Second World War.

While Analyzing *The Harp of Burma*, we realizes that Michio Takeyama's novel includes series of great ventures as well as striking, lamenting

passages and mediations on mysticism and liability. It is a highly entertaining and rewarding novel that contains one of the most dazzling and moving scenes ever written. Far from patriotic propaganda, this is kind of a moving representation of the pacific war and how the Japanese troops felt during the closing period of it. This book employs well shaped characters to discover what people do when a war is lost and their country lays in wreck. This book asks significant questions about whether war is innate to mercenary societies and whether human beings can take life of each other once their humanity is exposed. The answers to these questions form this book and outline the solicitous base of an appealing story.

The Harp of Burma got the Mainichi Award for Books and Publication in 1948 on the bases that it was an exceptional and unusual story of love for humanity filled with interesting Burmese traditions, which improved the excellence and significance of children's literature. It also acknowledged the Minister of Education Award for Arts in 1951. Even though it was in general valued as a work of genius, some pointed out that human disdain and corruption were creeping underneath the story.

The book was first translated into English by Howard Hibbett and published by Tuttle as *The Harp of Burma* in 1966. Yet, this book is so moving and tragic that once someone starts it, will likely constrained to find the rest. Thus, there is no need to say any more about this book.

Bibliography:

1. Michio, Takeyama, *Biruma no Tategoto* (Fukutake Shoten; Shohan edition)

2. Michio, Takeyama and Howard Hibbett (English Translator) The Harp of
Burma (Tuttle Publishing, June 1968)